

N<sup>o</sup> 7  
*The Defects of the Objections against the  
New Testament Application of the  
Prophecies in the Old, Exposed; and  
the Evangelists Application of 'em  
Vindicated,*

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I N A  
**S E R M O N**

Preach'd May 23. 1726.

Being the

*Archdeacon's Visitation*

A T

**NEWPORT-PAGNEL**

I N T H E

County of **B U C K S.**

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*Published at the repeated Request of  
divers of the CLERGY.*

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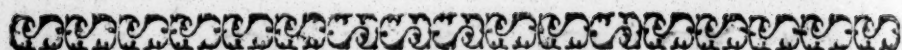
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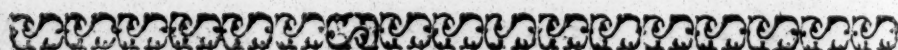
**L O N D O N:**

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N.B. *The Book quoted and alluded to in the  
Margin, is, A Discourse of the Grounds  
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## LUKE XXIV. 27.

*Beginning at Moses, and all the prophets,  
he expounded unto them in all the scri-  
ptures the things concerning himself.*



OUR Christianity having some time since met with a very sharp Attack from a Piece upon the Scripture Prophecies, it mayn't be amiss to entertain you a little upon that Head, that we may see upon the Result, where the Truth does in reality lye: To the more orderly doing of which, it may be meet to observe, that

Two of the Disciples, after the Crucifixion of him, whom they judg'd the *Hope of Israel*, had been surpriz'd with the News, that he was risen from the Grave after his Death.

This News was brought 'em first by certain Women, who having repair'd to the Sepulchre mis'd of finding his Body there, as they expected; and in the Place where it had lain, saw *Angels*, Messengers sent from the heavenly Regions, who assur'd 'em he was risen: But to the end that they might not be charg'd as too credulous and easy to surrender their Belief, some of their own Company, possibly *Peter* and *John*, went to inform themselves ver-ry thoroughly in a thing of so strange a Nature; and



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of whose Truth not only themselves greatly doubted (as having no Expectation of their Master's rising again) but of which every one else wou'd be more doubtful than themselves.

Because therefore they could neither have answer'd it to their own *Reason*, to have taken up the Belief of so important a Relation, upon an insufficient Evidence; because also they cou'd not have had wherewith to have convinc'd the *Gainfayers*, that wou'd doubtless arise to call this Fact in Question, they dispatch'd some to examine *nicely* the Sepulchre, and report back what Observations they had made; and *these* having confirm'd the Relation brought by the *Women* after a curious Search, the Disciples going to *Emmaus* were under all the Surprise, which these Tidings would naturally raise, when our blessed Master join'd himself to their Company.

Here let me observe from these few Particulars, before I proceed, that these Disciples were Men not easily to be *impos'd* upon, not ready to take any thing that was told 'em upon *Trust*; that they had a Diffidence sufficiently wary, as well as the Enemies, to an *implicit* Faith in the *present* Times; that *ours* is *not* the only Age, which has produc'd Men, that are *inquisitive* to a *commendable* degree: Neither have *all* that have ever liv'd before us, swallow'd greedily every *idle Tale* that was told 'em, and transmitted 'em as *Truths* to the Generations that were to follow.

Thus much is fairly to be inferr'd from these Disciples not immediately believing the *Womens* Report, but sending others after 'em for Information, who shou'd enquire into the Truth of the Fact reported. *Men, Men of Probity, Men*, who having as little dreamt of a Resurrection as themselves, wou'd diligently seek after the most *indubitable* Proofs of it.

*Men,*



Men, that having follow'd Jesus as a Divine Prophet, in opposition to the High Priest and Elders, had demonstrated themselves not such *Bigots* to their National Religion, or under the Fetters of so blind an Attachment to it, as to see with their Rulers Eyes, and to believe nothing but what they allow'd.

An Attestation of our Saviour's being risen, from such valuable Witnesses, ought in all Reason to have administer'd Life and Joy to these two Disciples; he being thereby put into a Possibility of effecting that Redemption for *Israel*, which they hoped for: But Jesus finding a Sadness in their Looks, upon the Subject-Matter of their Talk, ask'd what they were upon, that they seem'd thus dejected.

The Disciples wonder'd at the Question, making a Reply to this Effect, Is it possible for you, who see we have but just turn'd our Backs upon *Jerusalem*, and seem to be acquainted with the Place, to ask us, What we are talking of? If you can't guess, you are the only Man in all *Jerusalem*, that knows not what has been just now transacted there; for every Man, either inhabiting the Place, or resorting to it, cannot easily be a Stranger to 'em.

Upon our Saviour's asking what they were, they answer'd concerning *Jesus of Nazareth*, a Prophet mighty in Word and Deed before God and all the People, whom the Chief Priests condemn'd to Death, and in pursuance of that Sentence crucify'd; but we trusted that it had been He, who shou'd have redeemed *Israel*, that they shou'd have been no longer a People tributary to another Nation.

Before I proceed, let me pause a little to observe; how much fairer and juster Reasoners these Disciples were, than the Disputers of this Age.

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\* These Disciples, when Jesus no longer seem'd to 'em a Person from whom *Israel* cou'd expect Redemption, did not for that Reason cease to allow him to have been a *Prophet*, a *Prophet mighty in Deed as well as Word*. Mighty in *both* before *God* and all the *People*; a *Prophet* to whom *Heaven* and *Earth* bore their Testimony as a *Divine one*, whether he were the *Jews Messiah*, or prov'd the *Redemption* of *Israel*, or no.

They were not such *Novices* in Reasoning, or such foul Prevaricators rather, as to argue he was *no Prophet* at all, if he was not *that Prophet* the *Jews* expected: Neither were they so senseless as to aver, that it is an essential Characteristick of a Prophet, that he shou'd have been *prophecy'd of before hand*: And that if he was not *foretold*, it was impossible he shou'd have any *Credentials* to warrant our receiving him as the Messenger of Heaven.

This is so visibly a counterfeit Kind of Logick, that those Disciples wou'd have been asham'd to have allow'd it as current, as knowing his Character not tallying to the *Jews Messiah*, diminish'd not at all the Purity of his *Doctrine*, the Holiness of his *Life*, the vast Number of his *Miracles*, the wonderful Manner of his *Birth*, foretold by one *Angel*, usher'd in by an *Host*, his several *Predictions* of the Person that shou'd betray, the Person that shou'd deny him, the Manner of *Death* he shou'd die, the sundry Demonstrations he gave of his knowing the *Hearts* and *Thoughts* of those he convers'd with, of the divers Testimonies in his Favour by distinct *Voices* from the *Clouds*, proclaiming him the *Son* of the *Highest*, the Person whom Mankind was to hear as their *Teacher*.

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\* *An Answer to the General Proposition, contain'd Part I. Chap. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. That Christianity is founded on Judaism, and that Christianity is false, if the Proof from Prophecy is invalid.*

Contrroll'd with all this powerful Evidence, they pronounc'd him deserving the Character they gave him of a Prophet mighty in *Word* and *Deed* before God, and all the People.

And THIS, before they knew, that they had seen him after his rising again, before they had seen him ascending into the Heavens in the Company of Angels, before he had sent upon 'em the Holy Spirit, furnishing 'em with the Gift of Tongues, before they knew of his appearing from Heaven visibly to St. Stephen at his stoning, and was clearly heard from the Clouds by St. Paul at his Conversion, before they had wrought Miracles themselves, by the very Use of his Name, and the Communication of his Power.

Even before these after Evidences, they had enough to support their Belief in Jesus, as a Divine Prophet, and therefore with the Addition of 'em had superabundant Motives to induce their Assent to him in that Character.

So that however it fares with the Old Testament Prophecies, whether they can be made out as fairly corresponding to him or no; our Christianity will still be found standing on such a Rock, as will firmly support it. We know, whom we have believed, neither is it at all Adventures, that we have taken Jesus of Nazareth for a Teacher sent from God, or that we follow him as the great Captain of our Salvation, having numberless very cogent Reasons obliging us so to do; having Proofs of sundry Kinds, level at once to the Capacity of the Illiterate, and that have borne, and will bear the Scrutiny of the Learned.

Separately therefore from any Recourse had to the prophetick Writings, we are able to prove both to the Greek and to the Jew, to the Circumcision and Uncircumcision, to the Barbarian, Scythian, Bond and Free, that the Christ, whose Name we bear, and with whose Cross we were seal'd in Baptism, was truly  
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the *Holy One of God*, a *Prophet mighty in Word and Deed before God, and all the People.*

Not that he himself, or that we give up the *Prophecies*, as from whence no *Proofs* of his being the *Sent of God* were to be derived; for he chid those two *Disciples* to whom he join'd himself, as *foolish*, as *slow* of *Apprehension*, who had not enough *inform'd* themselves in the *sacred Writings*; if from the *Crucifixion* of *Jesus*, they despair'd of his proving the *Redemption* of *Israel*; for those *Writings* wou'd have told 'em, that those *Things* were no other, than what the *Christ of God*, was destin'd to suffer before he enter'd into his *Glory*.

Then did he who had the *Key of David*, opening *what none cou'd shut*, and *shutting what none cou'd open*, which alone cou'd perfectly unfold all those *venerable Truths*, which were shut up in *Obscurity* in the *Prophetick Writings*, unlock every *Thing* in 'em relating to himself, and display'd 'em fully to the *View* of the *Disciples* accompanying him.

*For beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.*

The *Text* supposes the *Scriptures* of the *Old Testament* to contain several *Passages* relating to our blessed *Master*; for 'tis said, the *Things* he expounded in 'em were *Things concerning himself*. The *Text* supposes also there to have been some *Obscurity* in those *Passages*, whose *Application* to him was not obvious to every transient cursory *Reading*; for had they been so, there wou'd have been no need of *expounding* 'em to his *Fellow-Travellers*: It supposes farther, that the *Passages* did not so obscurely relate to him; but a little *Exposition* upon 'em might demonstrate 'em so to do, to any of a tolerable *Capacity*, or he had surely spared himself the *Trouble* of *expounding*, if they were not capable of being made out by  
any

any *Exposition*: And doubtless, what was then satisfactory to those Disciples, wou'd have been equally satisfactory to us, had we been bless'd with that Discourse; but the Providence of God thought not good, that we should have it, as having provided a *sufficient* Foundation, whereon to build our Faith without it.

I shall take Occasion from these Words, to shew,

*First*, That what has been of late objected to the Old Testament Prophecies, as bearing an obscure and uncertain Testimony to our Saviour, is *unsatisfactory*.

*Secondly*, The strong Assurance we have, that the Passages in *Moses*, the *Prophets*, and the whole Body of the *Scriptures*, which are apply'd to him; do in Truth belong to *him*, and none other.

*Thirdly*, I shall show, that we can't be suppos'd to be *prejudic'd* in favour of any particular Doctrine of the Gospel for *Interest's* sake; it being no Interest of ours to entertain an *Error* for *Truth*, or stand up for *Christianity*, if it was founded in *Imposture*.

And *Lastly*, How it becomes us to comport ourselves towards the Men, who at any time publish their *Distrust* of the Foundation of our most holy Faith.

These are each of 'em Points, which the State of Religion in its present Posture requires to be particularly spoken to, and therefore an Entertainment not unseasonable upon this Occasion, if we are able to speak pertinently to each.

But, *First*, To show, That what has been of late objected to the Old Testament Prophecies, as bearing an obscure and uncertain Testimony to our Saviour is *unsatisfactory*.

As to the main Strength of what is advanc'd, that is to say, that Prophecy is the *best* and *almost only*

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Basis, on which the whole Fabrick of the Christian Religion stands, that has already been prov'd false; it having been made appear already, that Jesus is notwithstanding *fully* evinc'd to have been a *Divine Prophet*, even tho' the Prophetick Writings shou'd have been all of 'em defective in the Testimony they bear to him as the *Jews Messiah*; but over and above this Error early apparent in the Argument, we are able I trust to show farther, that the Objections to those Writings as contributing an Evidence very *obscure* and *uncertain*, are very *unsatisfactory* for divers Reasons.

\* Because, 1<sup>st</sup>, Tho' the Prophecies apply'd shou'd be own'd to prove *obscurely* and with *uncertainty* now, that is no Reason why they did so in the *Age* they were appeal'd to, to satisfy the *Jews*.

There might have been at the Time our Saviour enter'd upon his Prophetick Office, divers *Helps* which might serve 'em for a certain *Clue*, to lead 'em into the *Views* of the Prophetick Writers, which are wanting now, and for want of which, that which was then a *sure Word of Prophecy*, and as a *Light shining in a dark Place*, is now a *fainter Evidence*, a *less illustrious Demonstration* than *formerly*.

When *Herod* conven'd the *Jewish* Doctors to know the Place of their *Messiah's* Birth, they all unanimously gave in *Bethlehem* as the *Place*; tho' it be very doubtful, whether the *Jews*, if now conven'd upon any Question relating to the *Messiah*, cou'd speak with

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\* Surenhusius not having hit upon Rules to make out the New Testament Applications of the Prophecies which are satisfactory, no Argument to diminish the Credit of those Applications; from p. 53, to 78. the Author owning, p. 77. That 'tis possible, Surenhusius may not always hit of those peculiar Rules, which the Apostles in every Citation had in view, shews the Apostles Rules to have been confessedly unknown.



the same *Harmony* of Opinion; because what was then clear, may, for want of some Keys which since are lost, have become obscure, and which, if still amongst 'em wou'd enable 'em to see more distinctly into every Mark, by which the Messiah was to be distinguish'd.

To say, that we are *now* as equal for the Search, and finding out the *Scope* of the Prophecies, and judge of their being *justly* or *unjustly* apply'd, as the Persons living at the Time of our Saviour's *first* becoming a Preacher, wou'd be in a manner to aver, that any of our *Greek* Professors in either of the Universities wou'd be as sufficient to undertake the writing a *Commentary* upon *Aristotle*, or display the *Meaning* and *Beauties* of the ancient *Greek* Poets, as *Plutarch* wou'd have been: Who, tho' he liv'd some *hundred* Years after 'em, yet had numberless Advantages capacitating him for such a Work beyond what any Man can have *now*, as the having been *born* in *Greece*, well descended, of *Philosophical* Parents, that afforded him the Helps of studying at *Athens* itself, and under the *greatest* Philosopher of that Age, and of travelling *any where* to glean up Light and Information, and all this before the *Greek* Language was *totally* degenerated and become a *dead* one.

Divers Passages in the ancient Authors, which are but *ill* understood by us, were doubtless *easy* to him; and to say he wou'd not have been a much more competent Master for such a *Task*, than the most learned in the *Greek* Language, that's *now* alive, wou'd be an *Untruth* too palpably such for any Man to maintain; and so wou'd it be to say, that our *Saviour* and his *Apostles* were able in *their* Days, to expound the Prophecies *no better* than *we*; that *they* were able with no more Clearness to demonstrate, how the Prophecies belong'd to him only, than the Readers of the Prophetick Writings now; that the Testi-

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monies from Prophecy appear'd full as *faint* to the *Evangelists*, as they do to *us*, and that *they* understood 'em as imperfectly, and had no more Lights to let 'em into their Meaning, than *we*.

If then, we allow our Saviour and his Apostles, on the Account of their having liv'd *Seventeen hundred Years* nearer the Age of Prophecy than we do; for the sake also of their having had better Opportunities of *understanding the Language* in which they were wrote, the *manner of expounding 'em*, and *manifold other Advantages*, which we have not, to have been more equal for the Task of giving the Meaning of 'em, than any one now; then do we act more consonantly to the *Dictates of Reason*, in abiding by *their Interpretation* of 'em, in opposition to any Sense given us by modern *Cavillers* or *Commentators* that are found to contradict that Interpretation: It being a *Maxim* of Reason to prefer the Comment of Interpreters, who had *greater and better Helps*, to that of others who had *less and fewer*.

But moreover, what is very considerable is, that the Testimony entitling our Saviour to the Old Testament Prophecies relating to the Messiah, is a *positive* Testimony, challenging 'em to be his Due; whereas the Evidence pretending to deprive him of that Claim is a Testimony purely *negative*, amounting to no more than this, That the Party making it sees not *how* it is. The Evangelists *peremptorily* assert of their Knowledge, that such and such Prophecies belong to Jesus; the modern Cavillers assert, they see not how.

Now if the Prophecies given by the Evangelists to Jesus do not therefore belong to him, because *this* Man or *that* sees not *how*; by the same way of Reasoning we might prove, that there was not a *single* Proposition in the Mathematicks capable of having its Truth *demonstrated*, because there would  
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still be some who did not *enter* into the Demonstration, and cou'd not *trace* every Link of the Proof on which it was suspended.

If we do not in some certain Cases clearly understand how the *Application* suits the Prophecy, this shows indeed that we know not how to make it out, that the Sacred Writer has apply'd that Prophecy *right*; but it is no kind of Proof that he has apply'd it *wrong*; it being one thing to say, I see not *how* this is *true*; and another to say, I see that it is *false*.

And herein is eminently seen the Weakness of what is objected, Because of the Prophecies excepted to as *obscure*, they are not able to say they were so at the *Time* of their being apply'd; nor are they able *now* to pronounce any more in their Prejudice, than that they *discern* not their Truth; which does not at all invalidate their Testimony, unless they cou'd as well *demonstrate* their Falshood.

\* But besides the Exception to the Prophecies as not *perfectly* clear, is somewhat derogatory to the *Nature* of the *Proof* to be expected from 'em.

To prove the Truth of some things, we insist indeed upon *strict Demonstration*, whose Truth is so *clearly* seen, that we *know* it *cannot* be false: In the Case of others the thing will allow of barely a *moral Certainty*, where there is a bare *Possibility* of its being *false*, though the highest *Improbability* that it shou'd be so: But in the Case of *Prophecy*, which must needs be in its *Nature* somewhat *obscure*, or the *Completion* wou'd be capable of being *easily* render'd *abortive* by the *Design* and *Industry* of Men to prevent it; in the Case of *Prophecy*, I say, which

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\* *There being some Obscurity in Proof Typical, &c. no fair Objection, in Answer to Ch. 8. Part 1.*



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must be naturally somewhat *obscure*, it wou'd be unreasonable to expect *Proof*, which is *inconsistent* with its Nature to carry.

Fair *Probabilities*, reasonable *Conjectures*, somewhat below strict *Demonstration*, or *moral Certainty*, ought to weigh with us; if the Person of a Messiah is plainly *pointed* out, and the Lines thus pointing him do *most* of 'em center in *one* particular Person; if they *must* accord to *some one*, and yet do accord to *none* so well as *this*, it ought to be satisfactory, because the *Proof* fully corresponds to the *Capacity* of the Subject it is intended to be a Proof of.

St. *Thomas* was a Man, who cou'd not be suspected of over-great *Credulity*, nor St. *Paul* for want of *Learning*, and yet both of 'em did undoubtedly reckon the Application of the Old Testament Prophecies to Jesus as the Messiah was very *just*; arguing thereby their *Diffidence* and *Learning* to be temper'd with some *Sobriety*, and exposing those *false* Pretensions to *both*, which are now abroad. Those great Pillars of the Primitive Church knew how to make all just Allowances for the *Nature* of the *Subject* to be proved, and rested satisfied in the Proof, *such* as it *was*, when it was *fully such*, as the Nature of the Thing wou'd bear. For tho' St. *Thomas* requir'd the Conviction of his Senses, in the Business of the Resurrection, whether the Body rising was the *very* same with *that* which was crucify'd, because his *Senses* were *proper* Judges to appeal unto for its *Truth*, yet he was not so absurd, but he cou'd easily content himself with somewhat of *less* Demonstration, when the Subject was incapable of a Demonstration *so* great.

Whereas the *Learning* and *Diffidence* now appearing amongst us is grievously *ill* conducted, expecting the Demonstration to be always *alike*, when the Subjects are totally *different*, and the *Condition* of the Proof to be such as is utterly inconsistent with the *Quality* of the Subject to bear.

\* Again,

\* Again, it is *weakly* urg'd as an Exception to a Prophecy, that the Person uttering it had not *himself* a clear and distinct *View*, who it was, it belong'd to.

All the time *Isaac* was pronouncing his Blessing over *Jacob*, and foretelling his Superiority to his Brother, all this Blessing and Prediction was by *Isaac* directed to the Person of *Esau*, whom he thought to have been then present; and yet no one would except to this as a Prophecy not belonging to *Jacob*, because *Isaac* had him not in his *Thought* when he utter'd it. The Prophecy, as it was by Heaven order'd, so did it fly to a Mark *other* than *that* whereunto *Isaac* had directed it, *Gen. xxvii. 27.*

And who shall say the famous Prophecy of *Isaiab* concerning a Virgin's bringing forth a Son, belong'd not also to *another*, than *whom* he had in his Eyes when he deliver'd it in the hearing of *Abaz*, and was to terminate in a point at a *farther* Distance than *that* at which he aim'd.

The prophetick Speech was *God's*, tho' the Mouth dictating it was the *Prophet's*; who might therefore not know the Scope of what Heaven deliver'd by him as an *Instrument*, and might consequently be speaking truly of the *Messiah*, what he thought had reference to a *Child* to be quickly born. This we speak not as doubtful whether *Isaiab* had the *Messiah* in View or no, but only to show, that the Prophecy might nevertheless belong to the *Messiah*, tho' he had *not*.

For as to *Isaiab* it is not at all unlikely, but that *he who saw our Immanuel's Glory*, (*John xii. 41.*) was let into a distinct View also of his *Birth*, and

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\* *The Prophets having one Person in View, no Proof that the Prophecy belong'd not really to another. In Answer to the Difficulty rais'd upon Is. vii. 14. in Page 41, &c.*

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wou'd probably have been commission'd to have spoke more largely to *Abaz* concerning the great Redeemer of *Israel*, had *Abaz* been worthy of such a *Revelation*.

But finding him a Wretch of prodigious *Infidelity*, after he had given him an Hint of the Person the *Emanuel* was to be born of, might drop the Prophecy short, and turn aside to the Subject-Matter of his present *vain* Apprehensions, from the two smoking Firebrands combin'd for his Ruin; assuring him the Land shou'd be forsaken both of *Rezin* and *Pekah* before his Son *Shearjashub* shou'd know how to distinguish between Good and Evil.

If by reason of the *Unworthiness* of *Abaz* to be let any farther into the Secret of *After-times*, and what concern'd the *Messiah*, the Prophecy was industriously broken off, (at Verse 15 of *Isaiah* vii.) and diverted into the former Channel, when *Shearjashub* was first introduc'd, (and who shall say it was not?) then *all* the Difficulties rais'd upon it instantly vanish, and the Prophecy will be found belonging to *him* only, to whom the Evangelist applies it, *Matth.* i. 23.

How *weak* then, upon the Result, are those Objections to the Prophecies as misapply'd, which only a *single* Supposition admitted, and that a very *fair* and *possible* one, does so entirely invalidate, as to render of *no* Force at all.

Farther still have we Reason to reprehend the Objections as *weak*, because they extend only to *some* Prophecies, and not *all*; and where is the Strength of that Argument that concludes from *Particulars* to *Generals*, inferring that *no* Man can see, because *some* few Men have lost their Sight; or that *none* of the numerous Prophecies of the *Messiah* are clear, because *one* or *two* of 'em are obscure?



Divers *other* very just Exceptions have we to what is hinted, in Prejudice of the Application of the Old Testament Prophecies; but after all the learned Pains shewn by others upon the Subject, it wou'd be needless to mention 'em, more especially if it can be made out under the

*Secend General Head*, That we have the *strongest* Assurances, the Passages in *Moses*, the *Prophets*, and whole *Body of the Scriptures*, which are applied to him, do in truth belong to *our Lord* and *none* other.

The History of the late learned Dr. *Prideaux*, has given us great Light into some of the Prophecies of the Old Testament, and with more helps of the like Nature, we might be brought to discern more *clearly*, how the Prophecies apply'd to our Saviour, pointed solely to him, and were applicable no where else: But the *Providence* of God has provided Evidence enough to convince us of their just Application, altho' such Helps are wanting; and we the less need 'em, because he has sent into the World such Expositors to show where they pointed, upon whose *Sufficiency* for such a Task, and upon whose *Integrity* we might absolutely depend: and these were our Lord himself, and his Apostles.

Whether the Teacher of *Israel* had assum'd the Character of the *Messiah*, or no; whether he had apply'd what was predicted of the *Messiah* to *himself* or no, that wou'd not have hindred him from being the *Messiah* notwithstanding, and the Person delineated for such by the Prophets, if in him, and him only, there center'd all the scatter'd Marks belonging to the *Jews Messiah*.

If he was of *Abraham's Seed*, of *Judah's Tribe*, of *David's Line*, born at *Bethlehem*, and that of a *Virgin*, and about the *Time* the Messiah was to be  
C born;

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born ; if his *Miracles* were such as the *Messiah* was expected to work ; if, in short, to him were applicable all those Passages, which the *Jews* did anciently, with one accord, acknowledge to have had reference to the *Messiah* ; then must our Saviour have been he, whether he had made any Declarations of himself as such, or no.

But *his having declar'd* himself the Person, does so *effectually* demonstrate beyond all manner of doubt, that the Prophecies we give him are *rightly* his, are *justly* his Due, are a *Peculiar* of his own, exclusive of any one's Right besides to challenge 'em, that we may be satisfy'd we have nor err'd in the Construction put upon the prophetick Writings, because that Construction is corroborated by his *Testimony* and *Approbation*.

Jesus himself, when talking with the Woman of *Samaria*, plainly said, *he was the very Messiah* ; and when the High Priest ask'd him, Whether he *was the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?* (*Mark xiv. 61.*) or, which is in other Words, *the Messiah*, (*John i. 41.*) Jesus answer'd, *I am* ; challenging that Character as belonging to himself, however exalted the Character was, and mean as he in Appearance seem'd ; and divers times did *he* and his *Apostles* quote several Passages out of *Moses*, out of the *Prophets*, and *all the Scriptures*, to evince this Truth ; and if the present Scoffers at these Quotations are *right*, and Jesus and his *Apostles* *wrong*, then see what a numerous Train of monstrous Absurdities wou'd follow.

Then wou'd it follow, First, That these Ridiculers of the Quotations, notwithstanding all the Disadvantages they lye under, as knowing little of the *Language*, and vastly remov'd from the *Time*, wherein the Prophecies were writ, are yet *better* Interpreters of 'em than our *Lord* and his *Apostles*, and are

are able to detect their Citations, as a ridiculous Application of 'em, where they cou'd not possibly belong.

2dly, We must say, that Jesus, at whose *Birth* the whole Angelick Host rejoyc'd, proclaiming *Peace upon Earth, and Good-will to Men*: Whom the Baptist allow'd to be a Person *incomparably* greater than himself: Whom he heard pronounc'd from Heaven the *Beloved Son of God, in whom he was well pleas'd*; even *this* Jesus, whom Heaven gave this Attestation to, (if the Facts recorded in the New Testament are not all of 'em fabulous) he, I say, has *misquoted* the Prophecies, and *misapply'd* 'em, and was either so *ignorant*, as not to know to whom they ought to have been apply'd; or if knowing, so *knawish* as to challenge 'em for Witnesses to himself, when they contained no Evidence in his Favour.

Had he been such an one, *no Peace* could his Coming *bring on Earth* to Mankind, as the Angels said it would; no Instance was it of *the Good-will of Heaven to send him*, if he prov'd a Teacher either *ignorant* or *corrupt*, and would misguide the Sons of Men, either through Want of *Knowledge*, or Want of *Fidelity*.

Again; The *Baptist* knew not that the *Virgin's* Son was the *Son of God*, and came in a Character *Superior* to himself; but only he had a *Token* given by which he should know the Person God owned as his *Son*. For upon whomsoever he should see the *Spirit of God descending from Heaven like a Dove*, and abiding, the *same* was he to know to be the *Son of God*, the Person baptizing with the Holy Ghost; and having seen all this when he baptiz'd *him*, and heard God proclaiming him his *beloved Son* in whom *he was well pleas'd*, he bare him record, that *he was the Son of God*.



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Known unto God are *all* things, which are yet *distant* and *future*: But would God, had he foreseen he would have *perverted* the true Meaning of the Word of the Prophecy, have given this *solemn* Recommendation of him in the *Sight* and *Hearing* of the *Baptist*, who besides that he was a Man of *severe unexceptionable* Piety, was a Man of that *admirable* Sense, as to be a Preacher acceptable at the Court of *Herod*?

Again; *Peter*, and *James*, and *John* did all of 'em, at his Transfiguration, hear a distinct Voice from Heaven, proclaiming thus concerning him: "*This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased:*" *hear ye him.*

This *St. Peter* was so sure of as *no Delusion*, that to his dying Day he affirm'd this as an infallible Proof in Favour of the Master he adher'd to. 2 Pet. i. 16. *We have not follow'd cunningly devised fables*, says he, *when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty*: For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

Is it possible to imagine, that God would bid these Men to *hear* Jesus, (*Matth. xvii. 5.*) and receive him as his *Beloved*, if he had not amply furnish'd him with all the Qualifications of a *Teacher* fit to be *heard*; but had sent him forth so *ill* appointed for such an Office, as to *blunder* in the Interpretation of the Prophecy, in a manner gross enough to be detected by the *weakest* Understanding?

*Those* Men, who Heaven foresaw would be the *Heralds* of his Doctrine, sounding it to *all* the Parts of the habitable Earth they could reach unto; wou'd  
Heaven,

Heaven, I say, have order'd 'em to have *heard* a Man as its Ambassador, if he brought *Untruths* with him to be dispers'd? This is all of it so impossible, that nothing can be more.

Again; Our Lord was a Person, that all the time of his Preaching made the loudest Outcries against *Hypocrisy*, *Falshood*, and *Disguise*, the *lying* Glosses of the Doctors, and the *perverting* the true Meaning of the sacred Text, in whomsoever he found it, freely pronounc'd against it all the Terrors of the Wrath to come, and strenuously pleaded for *Uprightness*, and *Sincerity*, and *Truth*.

Had Jesus been himself a *Liar*, an *Hypocrite*, a *Misapplier* of the Prophetick Writings, an *Abuser* of the Text, he would surely have spared those Faults in others, and not *upbraided* that Sin, which he recommended by his own *Example*.

In short, considering that he who apply'd the Prophecies concerning the *Messiah* to *himself*, and taught his *Followers* so to do, was a Person, in point of *Virtue*, of a Character most *unexceptionable*; considering that he instantly gave *Sight* to the *Blind*, *Hearing* to the *Deaf*, *Feet* to the *Lame*, *Life* to the *Dead*: Considering that he himself, as an Earnest of his being able to fathom the *Depths* of the Old Testament *Prophecies*, did *prophecy* several things relating to his *Arraignment*, *Crucifixion*, and *Rising again*, which did all of 'em *punctually* come to pass: Considering that he was rais'd from the *dead*, in consequence of his *foretelling* it; that he visibly, in the Presence of many, *ascended* into Heaven after that Resurrection; and that he, in pursuance of his *Promise* before, did, after his *ascending*, send the *Holy Ghost* upon the Apostles, furnishing 'em with the Gifts of Languages:

Considering all this, I say, if we are *deceiv'd* in putting a Construction upon the Old Testament Prophecies,

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phesies, (tho' our Applications of 'em to Jesus as the Messiah are *ratified* by his applying 'em to himself) *Heaven it self* wou'd be *constrned* as having led us into the Error, by authorizing a Person bringing *indubitable* Tokens of being its Ambassador to support *our* Exposition by *one of his own*.

But as sure as we are, that the God of *Truth*, and not some Spirit of *Delusion*, has the Superintendence of this System of rational Beings, as sure as we are that God wou'd never send a *Prevaricating, Lying, Ignorant* Prophet to diffuse amongst immortal Spirits dwelling in Flesh, the pure Doctrines of *Sincerity, Light, and Truth*; as sure as Heaven wou'd not give such *numberless* Credentials to any Man, as must *oblige* us to own that Man for its *Ambassador*, unless it had *really* sent him upon its own Errand; as sure as it wou'd not by *audible Voices* from the Mansions above, bid us *hear* any particular Person, if it had not fully qualify'd that Person to be a *Teacher*; as surely as it wou'd not in a most surprising Manner bestow the *Gift of Languages* on the Apostles; if those Apostles wou'd abuse the *Gift* by disseminating *Error*, and putting a *Gloss* upon the Prophecies, which was not a *true one*: As sure as we are of *all* this, so sure are we, that the Prophecies in the *Old Testament*, which are quoted in the *New*, as appertaining unto *Jesus the Messiah, the Christ of God*, are *faithfully* apply'd, and not made to look unto *another* different from the *Person*, to whom the Holy Spirit pointed 'em, by whom the Prophecies were dictated.

I proceed now *Thirdly* to show, That we can't be fairly suppos'd *prejudic'd* in favour of any particular Doctrine of the Gospel for *Interest's* sake; it being no Interest of ours to entertain *Error* for *Truth*, or stand up for *Christianity*, if it was founded in *Imposture*.

If



If in reality that be *true*, which has already been prov'd abundantly *false*, that Christianity stands upon the Old Testament Prophecies as its *best* Foundation, and yet that Foundation appears to be no better than of *Sand*, absolutely insufficient to *support* the Fabrick erected upon it, it can be *no* Man's Advantage, to adhere to it, nor the Advantage of us of the *Clergy* to cleave thereunto, if a false Religion.

1<sup>st</sup>, Because, if Christianity be found only built on *Imposture*, then have we *no* Assurance of those *bright* and *endless* Rewards, which are brought to *Light* by the Gospel: And what should we get then by *still* cleaving to it, but the submitting to the severe Duties of Mortification and Self-Denial, the parting with an *offending Right Hand*, or *Right Eye*, of *daily taking up our Cross* without any certain Views of a distant Recompence, to serve as an *Anchor for the Soul both sure and stedfast*, to support us under all the *voluntary* Abridgment of our Desires, and the sacrificing of our Ease.

If it be said, *Yes*: But the Duties of Natural Religion lie within a *narrow* Compass, and are more obvious to every Man's Knowledge, and there wou'd be no Occasion for a *distinct* Order of Men to inculcate 'em: So, say we, does the Practical Part of Reveal'd Religion lie within as *little*.

The living *soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World*; the taking heed to *keep a Conscience void of Offence towards God and towards Men*; either of these contains in short the *whole* Substance of a Christian's Duty; and yet such is the *Backwardness* of Mankind to do this, that 'tis thought necessary there shou'd be an *Order* of Men, whose Office it shou'd be *continually* to awaken the Drowsy and In-cogitant to take heed to do thus much, to chalk out the *Methods* of doing it, to shew 'em what it is, that hinders their *Progress* in Holiness, and admonish 'em

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to remove whatever is an Obstacle to retard their growing to a *perfect Manhood in Jesus*.

And as much wou'd the World want such an Order of Men to call upon the Negligent to practise the Duties of *Natural*, as of *Reveal'd Religion*: 'Tho' *the giving to every one their due*; the *doing as we wou'd be done by*, and a few more Precepts wou'd comprehend the *whole Substance of Natural Religion*; and these are what every Man using his Reason knows to be his Duty, but *still* there wou'd be constant Need of Monitors to call upon 'em, to *practise* what they *know*.

Was it the only Part of the Priestly Office to *instruct*, it wou'd be *quickly* executed; but another Branch of it is to *rebuke* and to *exhort* as well; and this will be necessary so long as Men continue to want *Exhortation* and *Rebuke*, which they will do, whilst they dwell in these *fleshy* Tabernacles, and want no less calling upon to follow the Rules of Reason engraven on the *Fleshy Tables* of the *Heart*, than those *Rules*, which they find written in the *Gospel*.

Shou'd Christianity indeed be prov'd a *Mistake*, and that we have taken it upon a *false* Information; it then, we own, wou'd be *no longer* needful to preach *Jesus and him crucify'd*, but it wou'd not for that Reason *cease* to be needful to instruct Men, by demonstrating to 'em, that *the invisible Things of God are clearly seen from the Creation, even his eternal Power and Godhead*.

'Tho' we call'd not upon 'em to have *an Eye unto Jesus, as the Author and Finisher of our Faith*, yet wou'd it not for that Reason *cease* to be requisite, to let every Man know, that *in God we live and move, and have our Being*; that the *Living God never leaves himself without sufficient Witnesses of his Providence, in that he does good, giving us Rain from Heaven, and fruitful Seasons, filling our Hearts with Food and Gladness*.

And

And without an *Order* of Men continually to be doing this, the World wou'd soon degenerate into the greatest *Ignorance* and *Barbarity*; and the Lines of his Duty engraven on every Man's *Heart*, wou'd gradually wear out; the Consequence whereof wou'd be, that the Generality of Mankind wou'd become *vain in their Imaginations*, and *their foolish Heart darken'd: Knowing God, they wou'd not glorify him as such, nor become thankful to him, (Rom. i. 2.) but turning the Glory of the incorruptible God, into an Image made like unto corruptible Man, they wou'd change the Truth of God into a Lye, worshipping the Creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.*

Neither wou'd there be less *Deformity* in their *Manners* than *Vanity* in their *Worship*, for soon wou'd they be given up to all *Uncleannesses*, to *dishonour their Bodies between themselves, working that, which is unseemly, till in process of Time they came to so reprobate a Mind, as to do every Thing which is inconvenient.*

To prevent the *Good* from being choak'd with these *Tares*, and keep *Communities* from being overspread with such *Weeds*, as are an Annoyance to 'em, 'tis fit that wise *Labourers* shou'd be employ'd to *dress and keep the Garden.*

*Human Laws* and *Magistrates* are not altogether sufficient for this: Those indeed ease us sometimes of a pernicious *Branch*, which, by its *Wickedness*, is become an *Incumbrance* to the *Soil*, by lopping it off; but they don't remove the *Cause* of the Evil, nor destroy the *Egg* from whence this Cockatrice was form'd.

In order to do this, it is absolutely necessary to purify the *Fountain* from whence the *bitter Waters* are deriv'd, to root out the *false Principles*, to heal the *Judgment* of Man, from whose *Depravation* pro-



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ceed evil Actions of every Kind, such as *Fornication, Murther, Adultery.*

The way to do this, wou'd be to furnish the Mind with the noblest Sentiments of *Piety*, of *Justice* and *Temperance*; of the Sacredness of an *Oath*; of the *Dignity* of Human Nature, of the intrinsick Beauty and Comeliness of *moral Vertue*; of the natural Rewards it carries with it, and the *Deformity*, the *Shame*, the *Punishment* which every *Vice* is attended with.

And all this is not to be effected without constant *Monitors*, and frequent *Admonitions*, and obliging Men at fixed and certain Times to listen to the *Voice of these wise Charmers*: By which means only it can be effected, that the *Characters* of Good and Evil the Mind is fraught with, will continue *bright* and *legible*, and able to contain Men within the Bounds of Duty out of *Choice*.

Was there not some Provision made of this Kind, to kill the *Seeds* of Vice, one Prison and Place of Execution wou'd not serve for a County, every larger Parish wou'd almost need 'em, and yet not cure the *Evil*, because not reaching the *Cause*.

So long therefore as the Minds of Men wou'd want to be season'd with the Principles of *Vertue*, and *moral Goodness*; it wou'd be always necessary to have Universities, Schools of *good Literature* and *ingenuous Education*, where those liberal Arts are taught, the imbibing whereof polishes our *Manners*, and files off the brutish *Roughness* cleaving to 'em.

It wou'd be always necessary to have a Set of Men educated *there*, who might *there* learn by Reasons to prove and defend those Attributes and Perfections, which we know by the Light of Nature to be necessarily belonging to the *supreme Being*, when Sceptical Men shall call those *Attributes* and *Perfections* in Question, might learn also by all the Topicks of Persuasion, to recommend *Vertue* to the *Practice* of Mankind,

Mankind, and paint out *Vice* to 'em in its just Deformity, stripping it of all those Disguises it shrouds itself under, when it wou'd recommend itself to our Acceptance.

Thus much may be enough to stop the Mouths of *those* that are apt at every Turn to cast it as a Reproach upon our Character, that tho' they advance never such convincing *Proofs* to invalidate the Christian Religion, we are resolv'd *not* to be convinc'd, because our *Interest* is concern'd, and that we *will* raise a Dust to blind the Eyes of Mens Understanding with *sophistical* Reasonings, when we *know* we have the *wrong* Side of the Argument.

The shewing an Order of Men wou'd be everlastingly needful to *defend*, to *study*, to *inculcate*, to *enforce* the very Duties of *Natural Religion*, even if we had *no* Revelation, *no* Scriptures, which are the *Epistle of the great God*, proves effectually that we cry not out for the *Divinity* of Jesus, for the *Authority* of holy Writ, because of the *Gain arising to the Craftsmen thereby*, since the *Priestly Order* wou'd not be abolish'd, and grow useles, if the Author of our Religion shou'd be found, as having brought either *false* Credentials, or *none at all* of his being the Messenger of Heaven.

Our Faith therefore in him as the *Rock of our Salvation* is not built upon the sandy Bottom of temporal *Interest*, but upon the controlling Force of the *Evidence* there is of his being verily the Sent of God; which Evidence is so *rational* and *convincing*, that we cannot possibly withstand while we continue *reasonable* Beings.

I proceed now to the LAST Thing to be spoken to, which is to shew, How we ought to comport ourselves towards the Men, who at any Time publish their *Distrust* of the Foundation of our most holy Faith.

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St. Peter bids us, (1 Pet. iii. 15.) *to be ready always to give an Answer to every Man, that asketh us a Reason of the Hope that is in us, with Meekness and Fear or Reverence.*

When Objections are handed about against the *Hope* that is in us, we are not to wonder, it being natural for Men, whom we seek to convert to that *Hope*, to *examine* well, and freely *declare* their *Scruples* before they embrace it. And 'tis no less a Thing to be expected, that several, who have been educated in it, will, when come to be capable of judging, *search* the Bottom of *these* Tenets, in the Belief of which they have been nourished up.

When these shall publish their *Scruples*, and the *Difficulties* occurring to 'em, it becomes us to consider 'em, and be provided with an Answer, delivering it with *Meekness* when provided.

And *very* reasonable it is we should: For either the Objections are *weighty*, carrying a fair Appearance of Reason, or they are *not*. If they are *weighty*, then they have a Right to a *mild* and *dispassionate* Answer; because it is possible for a reasonable Being to be led away into an Adherence to 'em, by that Appearance of *Reason* they carry with 'em.

But if the Objections are not *weighty*, but *weak* and *trifling*, then they are the *easier* answer'd; we need to be put into *no* Ferment and Disorder about 'em, the Person making 'em sufficiently exposing his *Weakness* thereby, and in no likelihood of gaining any Profelytes to an Opinion, whose *Falshood* is quickly obvious upon the slightest Examination.

In *rashly* calling for *Fire* from Heaven to consume any Man doubting of the establish'd Faith, we should shew our selves forgetful what *manner* of *Spirit* we are of; and suppressing of heterodox *Tenets*, when advanc'd by bare Dint of *Authority*, would give some *Credit* to 'em, whether they deserv'd it  
or



or no; making 'em concluded unanswerable by *Argumentation*, and that therefore *Power* was requisite to suppress, what *fair Reasoning* could not.

It would also reflect upon the *whole* Body of the *Clergy*, a Character they no ways deserve, supposing 'em to hold such Opinions, as they *implicitly* enough swallow'd, but had not *Learning* enough to defend.

It has pleas'd God, that the Disciples of his *beloved* Son should in every Age, since the glad Tidings of the Gospel were first publish'd, be *thus* exercis'd: That *Disputers and Gainsayers* should arise; and yet his Providence has not been wanting in providing *many* to expose and convince 'em. Neither has he left his Church destitute of *able* Advocates now. Still is it furnish'd with Men of Learning to detect the *Sophistry* of the *false* Reasoners, and satisfy the *just* Scruples of the *sober* Enquirers after Truth.

A Demonstration of this are the several Treatises asserting the *Justice* of our Lord's Claim to many things advanc'd by *Moses and the Prophets concerning him*, which have been lately publish'd by Men of *Renown* for Learning, and famous in the *present* Generation.

But had *not* God rais'd up these able Advocates for the Truth, yet notwithstanding, to depart from *long* received Opinions, that have born the Examination of *many* Ages, for the Sake of an Argument newly started, which we are not able at *first* to answer, wou'd be a being *carry'd to and fro* with every Wind of *Doctrine*, and such a *Wavering* and *Instability* as is highly blameable.

We may allowably *suspend* our Belief of a Proposition, against whose Credibility a Reason seeming to be a good one is given; but not immediately *surrender* or *reject* it as false; but rest awhile to see what may be offered in Answer to it, which may perhaps give us Satisfaction.

This

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This I speak to vindicate us from the Reproach usually cast upon us by the Starters of *new* Opinions, who are apt to say, "If the Doctrine I advance be a true one, have Honesty enough to own it, as I do: If a false one, confute it. Whereas it is a sufficient Protection against the Odium of this *Dilemma* to say, It is by no means right to give in to a Proposition as *true*, whose *Falshood* I do not presently see. It is fit that *Time* shou'd be allow'd to try the Spirit, whether it be of God; to search the Scriptures, whether these things are so, and not cast that Affront upon the Learning, and that Reflection upon the Care and Honesty of all the great Men who have liv'd before us, as suddenly to give up any Article of our Creed for *false*, which they embrac'd as *true*, for the Sake of a new started Objection, which at first surprises us.

When the Raisers of any new Doctrines treat the commonly receiv'd ones after a *ludicrous* Sort; when they advance Tenets tending necessarily to eradicate the *Belief* and *Fear* of the Supreme Being, a Government is then with Severity to animadvert upon such *saucy* and *pernicious* Scoffers.

But when Men of *Learning* and *Probity*, in a commendable Search after Truth, propose somewhat *new*, to such it is that we ought with *Meekness* to give a *Reason of our Hope*, and with *Candor* offer 'em those Arguments inducing us to adhere to the *old* Opinion, and reject the *new*; demonstrating, that the present received *Article*, if capable of such Demonstration, has an undoubted Right to continue its Place in the Creed, and that the Church did not at first *rashly* honour it with the Dignity of being made an Article of its Belief without the justest Pretensions to it.

Furnish'd with all this *Fairness* and *Candor*, we are ever in the best Disposition to discern what is *true*; and

and if we can convince the Gainfayer, that we for no other *Reason* cleave unto the Christian Faith, but for the Sake of those unexceptionable Marks of *Truth* we find belonging to it; if it plainly appears, that we shou'd be no less wanted by the World to assert the *Truths*, and inculcate the *Dictates* of *Natural* Religion than of *Reveal'd*, we must extort this Confession from *all* Men, that it is not *Interest* but *Truth* which determines our Assent, and that we believe *not*, but because we are able to give a *Reason* why we do.

And shou'd we be empower'd by the Force of our *Exhortations* and *Examples* to recommend the Gospel Duties to every Man's *Practice*, no less than we recommend the Gospel *Doctrines* to their *Belief* by the Force of our *Reasons*; then wou'd Christ's Spouse the *Church*, the great Field in which we labour, be soon ripe for the *Harvest*; and the 'Time of Recompence to us the *Labourers* wou'd speedily advance, to whose assiduous watering its *Light* and *Purity* might be said to be in some degree owing, tho' to *God* only there *primarily* belongs the *Glory* of the Increase.

F I N I S.





